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PRESS RELEASE-For Immediate Release

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Spring Cleaning for People with Asthma

Its spring cleaning time and some of us will take the opportunity to clean out the dust, dirt and allergens that have collected in our homes over the winter months. But for those individuals with asthma it is also an activity that could exacerbate their condition and lead to an asthma attack.

There are 50 million Americans who have allergies, and 20 million who have asthma. It is very important that asthma sufferers be extremely careful when they are doing any spring cleaning or cleaning in general. When people with asthma clean properly, they can manage the indoor air quality, and lessen the nasal congestion, coughing, sneezing, headaches, and other severe symptoms they often experience. It is important that people with asthma use effective cleaning methods to address the most common indoor allergy triggers; dust mites, pet dander and common household mold. Other things that might cause a reaction are tobacco smoke, aerosols, paint, perfumes, cleaning products or other strong odors or fumes.

This doesn't mean that people with asthma should get out of spring cleaning. They just need to be aware of what their triggers are and how to avoid them or take precautions to avoid an asthma attack. The American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology has come up with a spring cleaning check list:

- Get rid of clutter that may be collecting dust
- Clean windows, book shelves and air conditioning vents thoroughly as they may have collected dust and mold throughout the winter.
- Put mattresses, box springs, and pillows in allergy-proof or "non-allergenic" cases
- Vacuum carpeting regularly with a double-bag or Hepa vacuum cleaner, or replace it with washable throw rugs
- Wash blankets, sheets, and pillowcases in 130-degree water and dry in a hot dryer (this should be done every week)
- Fix leaks –they leave surfaces wet and allow mold to grow
- Clean moldy surfaces, such as the corners of showers or under sinks with a cleaning solution that is 10 parts water to one part bleach

- Clean under stoves, refrigerators, or toasters where loose crumbs can accumulate and attract cockroaches
- Damp dust all surfaces that contain dust
- Block cellar doors, outside drains, and wall, window, or floor cracks where cockroaches could enter your home
- Keep bathroom and kitchen surfaces dry, fix leaky plumbing and seal cracks where water can seep in to avoid mold buildup; reduce humidity in damp areas by using a dehumidifier. Use exhaust fans to increase kitchen and bathroom ventilation
- Maintain the humidity in your home below 50%
- Keep pets off of the furniture
- Bathe your cat or dog on a weekly basis

When using cleaning products, please read the labels, some products can be explosive/reactive and can cause toxic vapors examples of such products are chlorine bleach and ammonia which can exacerbate a person's asthma, especially children. Non-toxic products or home-made cleaning formulas are better.

Another way for people with asthma to better manage their asthma is by making sure that the medications they are taking is working for them, if they are not it is their responsibility to talk to their physician to get their medications adjusted. Another action that can be taken is by attending the Asthma Education Class that is being offered by St. Luke's Medical Center and South Central Public Health District, every 3rd Thursday of the month from 6-8 p.m. This class helps those that are newly diagnosed or those that have been diagnosed for years, to better understand their asthma. To reserve a spot in the next class, please call 737-2700.

If you would like more information about asthma or a copy of the safer cleaning alternatives or less-toxic household products, please call Elvia Caldera, Health Education Specialist, South Central Public Health District 737-5988.

Side Bar

Some Less-Toxic Household Products:

- Bio Bello All-Purpose
- Dr. Bronner's Castile Soap
- Ajax Lemon Fresh
- Baking Soda
- Mr. Clean Liquid Abrasive Cleaner
- Comet Liquid Bathroom Cleaner
- Lysol Deodorizing Cleaner
- Borax
- Vanish Blue or Green Automatic

- Biz bleach (non-phosphate)
- Clorox 2 Liquid Bleach
- Plunger
- For drain cleaning: baking soda/vinegar/boiling water mix

Side Bar #2

Toxic free home-made cleaning formulas

- All-purpose cleaner: Mix ½ cup vinegar and ¼ cup baking soda (or 2 teaspoons borax) into ½ gallon (2 liters) or water.
- Disinfectant: Mix 2 teaspoons borax, 4 tablespoons vinegar, and 3 cups hot water.
- Bathroom mildew: Mix one part hydrogen peroxide with two parts water in a spray bottle and spray on areas with mold. Wait one hour before rinsing. For stubborn mold, a diluted solution of bleach can also be used. Ten parts water to one part bleach.
- Carpet stains: Mix equal parts white vinegar and water in a spray bottle and spray directly on the stain. Let it sit for several minutes, and clean with a brush or sponge using soapy warm water.
- Furniture polish: For varnished wood, add a few drops of lemon oil into ½ cup warm water. Mix well and spray onto a slightly damp cotton cloth.
- Air freshener: Baking soda or vinegar with lemon juice in small dishes absorbs odors around the house. Or place bowls of fragrant dried herbs and flowers in each room. Or, pick out an essential oil of choice and heat in an infuser for a little aromatherapy

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